CHRIST in the CLOUDS

COMING TO

JUDGMENT.

A

SERMON,

FROM

MATTHEW XVI. 27.

Then ſhall he reward every man according to his Works.

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CHRIST in the CLOUDS COMING TO JUDGMENT.

MATTHEW xvi. 37.

Then ſhall he reward every man according to his Works.

THE text gives us an account of the day of doom, which is the laſt day of aſſize, wherein every man ſhall be tried at the bar of God's juſtice, and every man ſhall then and there, receive according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.

I ſhall not trouble myſelf nor you, with the terrors of this day, becauſe I have not time, but will procced.

It is moſt certain the day of judgment will come; and that it will be dreadful to all the wicked. But ſeeing theſe things muſt be, what ſort of perſons ought we to be in all manner of converſation, always looking for the coming of Chriſt, at whoſe coming, the ſun ſhall be darkened, and the moon ſhall not give her light, the ſtars ſhall fall from heaven, the powers of heaven ſhall be ſha-

ken, the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat! Who can hear all this, and not be wonderfully diſmayed? Oh! who dares eat, drink or ſleep, or take a minute's reſt? Be ſure that day ſhall come. O awake ye drunkards, and weep all ye drinkers of wine, becauſe of the new wine; for it ſhall be pulled from your mouth. Gird yourſelves and lament ye prieſts; howl ye miniſters of the altar, alas! the ſore terrible day of the Lord is at hand.

The DOCTRINE is this.

"This is a goſpel truth, that Chriſt who came "into the world in the form of a ſervant, will "one day come as a Judge, attended with his ho- "ly angels."

And if this be ſo, then firſt for an uſe of exhortation.

1ſt, Let us all be warned, and while we have time, provide for that day: Yet the weather is fair, we may frame an ark to ſave us from the flood; yet are the angels at the gate of Sodom, and yet is Jonah in the ſtreets of Nineveh; yet the prophet laments, crying, O Judah! how ſhall I intreat thee? Yea, the apoſtle prays, nay, we pray in Chriſt's ſtead, that ye be reconciled unto God. But here a queſtion will ariſe, How will Chriſt appear?

I anſwer. He, who as man, once appeared to be judged, will then appear to judge all mankind. Conſider this, ye that are going to the bar; what a dreadful ſight will this be to the faithleſs Jews, ſtubborn Gentiles, and wicked Chriſtians, when every eye ſhall ſee him, and they alſo that pierced him? This is the man, ſhall they ſay, that was crucified for us, and again crucified by us. Why, alas!

alas! every ſin is a croſs, and every oath is a ſpear, and when that day is come, you muſt behold the man, whom thus you do crucify by your daily ſin, ſure this will be a fearful ſight. Where is the bloody ſwearer, that can tear his wounds, heart and blood? At that day all theſe words will appear, the heart be viſible, and the body and the blood, be ſenſible of good and evil, then ſhall the fearful voice proceed from his throne. Where is the blood thou haſt ſpilled! Here is the woful and terrible judgment, when thou that art the murderer, ſhalt ſee the ſlain Man be thy judge; what favours canſt thou think to expect at his hand, whom thou haſt ſo vilely and treacherouſly uſed by thy daily ſins; Be ſure, the Son of man will come as it is written, "But woe unto that man by whom the Son of "man is betrayed; it had been better for that man "he had never been born." Matth. xxvi. 24.

As Chriſt ſhall appear in the form of a man, ſo this man ſhall appear in a glorious form. Oh, ſinner! look about you, the Judge is coming: A fire devours before him, and behind him a flame burns; on every ſide, the people tremble, and all faces ſhall gather blackneſs. Here is a change indeed! he that was at the bar, now ſits on the throne, and that for ever and ever. Then Chriſt ſtood as a lamb before Pilate, now Pilate ſtands as a malefactor before Chriſt, "He that was made the foot-"ſtool of his enemies, muſt now judge till he has "made his enemies his footſtool." Where ſhall they run, and how ſhall they ſeek the cleſts of the rocks and hollow places? The glory of his Majeſty will kindle a flame, while the heaven and the earth ſhall flee away from the preſence of the powerful Judge.

But if here be the Judge, where is the guard;

Behold him coming from above with great power and glory! Would you know his habit! He is indeed clothed with majeſty. Would you know his attendants? They are an hoſt of holy angels; nay, yet a much longer train, even the ſouls of the ſaints deſcending from their imperial ſeats, and attending the Lamb with great glory. Never was there any judge, lord of ſuch a circuit: His foot-ſtool is the clouds, his feet is the rainbow, his judges are ſaints, his officers, angels and archangels. The trumpet proclaims a ſilence, whilſt a juſt ſentence cometh from his mouth upon all the world. Thus you ſee the aſſize begun: "I beheld till the "throne was caſt down, ſaith the prophet, and the "Ancient of days did ſit, whoſe garments were "white as ſnow, and the hair of his head like pure "wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and "the wheels as burning fire," Dan. viii. 9.

This is the Judge, whoſe coming is ſo fearful, uſhered in by a fiery cloud, and apparelled in ſnowy white, carried in his circuit on burning wheels, and attended with thouſands of thouſands. O ye Jews! behold the man, whom before ye crucified as a malefactor; behold him on his throne, whom you ſaid, his diſciples had ſtolen away by night out of his grave, Matth. xxviii. 13. Behold him in his Majeſty, him upon whom you would not look in his humility. This is he at whoſe appearance, the kindreds of the earth ſhould mourn. Such a ſhout of fury follows the ſight of his Majeſty, that the vaults ſhall echo, the hills reſound, the earth ſhall ſhake, the heavens ſhall paſs away, and be turned to confuſion. Then ſhall the wicked mourn, then ſhall they weep and wail, yet their tears ſhall not ſerve their turn; their ſins paſt betray them, their ſhame condemns them, and their

their torments to come confound them: Thus ſhall the wicked bewail their miſerable, hapleſs, unfortunate birth, and curſed end. O fearful Judge terrible as an army with banners: The kings of the earth ſhall be aſtoniſhed, and every eye ſhall ſee this Judge and tremble at his ſight. Lo, but conceive the guilty priſoner come to his trial: Will not the red robes of this Judge make his heart bleed, for his blood ſhed: Thus have I ſhewed you, how Chriſt will appear in a glorious manner.

1. Think now, O ſinner! What ſhall be thy reward, when thou ſhalt meet this Judge? The adulterer for a while, may flatter beauty, ſwearers grace their words with oaths, the drunkards kiſs their cups, and thank their bodily healths, till they drink their ſouls to ruin: But let them remember, "For all theſe things, God will bring "them into judgment;" A ſad comfort in the end. How ſhall the adulterer ſatisfy his luſt, when he lies on a bed of flames! The ſwearer ſhall have enough of wounds and blood, when the devil ſhall torture his body, and rack his ſoul in hell. The drunkard ſhall have plenty of his cups, when ſcalding lead ſhall be poured down his throat, and his breath draw flames of fire inſtead of air. As is thy ſin, ſo is thy puniſhment: This judge will give juſt meaſure in the balance of his indignation and wrath.

For comfort to all that are the Judge's favourites, now is the day, (if ye are God's ſervants) that Satan ſhall be troden under your foot, and you with your Maſter, Chriſt, ſhall be carried into the holy of holies. You may remember how all the men of God in their greateſt anguiſh here below, have fetched comfort from the eyes of faith, it was at

this mountain Job rejoiced, being caſt on the dung-hill, that his Redeemer lived; and that he ſhould ſee him at the laſt day ſtand on the earth; ſo likewiſe the evangeliſt John longed and cried, 'Come 'Lord Jeſus, come quickly,' Rev. xxii. 20. 'Now 'little children abide in him, that when he ſhall 'appear, we may have confidence and not be a-'ſhamed at his coming. And this is the promiſe 'that he hath promiſed us, even eternal life,' 1 John ii. 28, 25. But I proceed,

The perſons to be judged, are a world of men, good and bad, elect and reprobate.

Firſt. There is a ſummons, and this every man muſt hear, and this ſhall be the voice of the laſt trumpet, 'Ariſe ye dead, and come to judgment!' O what a fearful and terrible voice will this be to all the wicked? How will they tremble at his voice, which makes the earth to tremble? Even at this voice the graves of the dead ſhall be opened, and every ſoul re-united to its own body; the dark pit of hell ſhall be ſhaken, when the dreadful ſoul ſhall leave its place of terror, and once more re-enter into its ſtinking carrion, to receive a greater condemnation. John v. 28, 29. The voice of Chriſt is a powerful and ſtrong voice. 'The dead 'ſhall hear his voice, and they ſhall come forth, 'they that have done good unto the reſurrection 'of life, and they that have done evil to the re-'ſurrection of condemnation.'

Thus much for the ſummons, you hear it given, and every man muſt appear: Death muſt now give back all that he hath taken from the world. What a ghaſtly and ſhocking ſight ſhall this be, to ſee all the graves open, and to ſee dead men ariſe out of their graves, and the ſcattered flying on the wings of the wind, till they meet together in one body

body, Ezek. xxxvii. 6. 'The dry bones ſhall live.' Behold the power of God Almighty, out of the grave and the duſt of the earth, from theſe chambers of death and darkneſs, ſhall raiſe the bodies of the buried, Rev. xx. 12, 13. 'I ſaw the dead, 'ſaith St. John) ſmall and great, ſtand before God, 'and the ſea gave up the dead which were in it; 'and death and hell delivered up the dead that 'were in them; and they were judged every man 'according to his works. He that ſaid to corruption thou art my father, and to the worm thou 'art my ſiſter and mother,' ſaid alſo, 'I know that 'my Redeemer liveth, and mine eyes ſhall behold 'him.' Oh, good God! How wonderful is thy power. Joel iii. 11, 12. 'Aſſemble yourſelves, and 'come all ye heathen to the valley of Jehoſhaphat, for there will I ſit to judge all the heathen 'round about.'

Thus have ye an account of the dead being raiſed; they are all brought together, and now we muſt put them aſunder; the ſheep ſhall be put on the right hand, and the goats on the left hand. And now ſee the parties thus ſummoned, raiſed, gathered, and ſet apart. Is not here a world of men to be judged all in one day: All tongues, all nations and people of the earth ſhall appear in one day: we ſhall then behold each ſon of Adam, and Adam ſhall then ſee all his poſterity. Conſider this, ye that are high and low, rich and poor, one with another, 'for with God there 'is no reſpect of perſons.' Hark, O beggar! petitions are out of date, yet thou needeſt not fear, for thou ſhalt have juſtice done thee this day; All cauſes ſhall be heard, and thou, though ever ſo poor, and even deſpiſed in the world, muſt with the reſt receive thy ſentence. Hark, O farmer! now are

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the lives and leaſes together finiſhed, this day is the new harveſt of the Judge, who gathers in his wheat, and burns up his chaff with fire unquenchable: No bribes, prayers, nor tears; but as thou haſt done, ſo thou art ſentenced. Hark, O landlord! where is thy purchaſe to thee and thy heirs for ever? This day makes an end of all. And unhappy were thy ſoul, if thou hadſt not better land than a barren rock to cover and ſhelter thee from the preſence of the Judge. Hark, O captain! how vain is the hope of man to be ſaved by the multitude of an hoſt. Thou haſt commanded all the armies of the earth and hell, yet canſt thou not reſiſt the power of heaven. Hark, the trumpet ſounds, and the alarm ſummons thee, thou muſt appear: All muſt appear, the beggar, the farmer, the captain, the prince, and the greateſt potentates of the world! Nay all ſhall receive their reward according to their deſerts.

2dly, This is for terror to the wicked; every man muſt appear: Oh, that every man would but think of it. Would you know the man that ſhall at this day be bleſſed? it is he that thinks on this day and prepares for it. O then, I beſeech you, meditate every day, that you and every man muſt one day appear before the Judge of the quick and dead, and receive according to your works.

And now having brought the priſoners to their trial, I muſt tell you how this trial muſt be; for your works, faith juſtifies, but it is by works we are judged. Miſtake me not, he ſhall be judged according to his works, as being the beſt witneſs of his inward righteouſneſs. But the better to acquaint you with this trial, we come to conſider.

1ſt.

1ſt. How all men's works ſhall be manifeſted to us.

2dly, How all men's works ſhall be examined by God.

Firſt: Of the manifeſtation of every man's works Rev. xx. 12. 'I ſaw the dead ſmall and great, 'ſaith St. John) ſtand before God: and the books 'were opened; and another book was opened, 'which is the book of life; and the dead were 'judged out of theſe things which were written in 'the books, according to their works.' Remember this, O forgetful ſinner, you may commit ſin after ſin, and multiply your ſins; but be ſure God keeps a juſt account, and none of your ſins, though ever ſo ſecret ſhall be forgot. There is a book of God's memory, it is called, a book of remembrance, Mal. iii. 16. 'A book of remembrance, was written before God, for them that 'feared the Lord and called upon his name.' This is that which manifeſts all ſecrets: This is that which reveals all doings, whether good or evil. In theſe records are found at large, Abel's ſacrifice, and Cain's murder, Abſalom's rebellion, and David's devotion, the Jews' cruelty, and the prophets' innocency. Nothing ſhall be hid when this book is opened, for all may run and read it. 'God will 'bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good or whether it be 'evil.' Eccleſ. xii. 4. Wail ye wicked, and tremble in aſtoniſhment. Now your cloſet ſins muſt be diſcloſed, and your private faults laid open.

Imprimis, For adultery, envy, blaſphemy, drunkenneſs, oaths, violence, murder, ſabbath-breaking, lying, and every other ſin from the beginning to the end, from your birth to your death, the total ſum is eternal death and damnation. But there

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is another book, that ſhall give a more fearful evidence than the former, that is ſecretary in the ſoul of man; No man can commit a ſin, but the ſoul that is privy to the fact, will write it in this book: what a woeful caſe will thy poor heart be then in? What a ſtrong terror of trembling muſt it then ſtand poſſeſt with, when this book ſhall be opened and thy ſins revealed? This book is now perhaps ſhut up and ſealed; but in the day of judgment it ſhall be opened, and what will be the evidence that will be brought in? There is a private ſeſſion to be held in the breaſt of every ſinner, the memory is the record, truth is the law, damnation is the judgment, hell is the priſon, devils the jailors, and conſcience both the witneſs and the judge to paſs ſentence upon thee. What hopes can he have at the general aſſize, whoſe conſcience hath condemned him before he appears: Conſider this O thou impenitent ſinner!

But yet there is another book we read of, and that is the book of life, wherein is written all the names of God's elect, from the beginning of the world unto the end thereof. This is the precious book of heaven, wherein, if we be regiſtrated, not all the powers of darkneſs, death, or devils, can blot us out again. Therefore, to make ſome uſeful applications.

1. Conſider now, O ſinner! what books one day muſt be ſet before thee. The time will come, when every word of thy mouth, every glance of thy eye, every moment of thy time, every ſermon thou haſt heard, every thing thou haſt left undone, all ſhall be ſeen and laid open before men, angels and devils; thou ſhalt then and there, be horribly and everlaſtingly aſhamed. Never go about then to commit ſin, though ever ſo ſecretly, though at mid-

midnight, and all the doors locked about thee, for at this great day it ſhall be brought to light.

2. As you intend the good of your ſouls, amend your lives, call yourſelves to an account, while it is called to-day, ſearch and examine all your thoughts, words, and deeds: proſtrate yourſelves before God, with broken and bleeding affections, pray that your name may be written in the book of life, and if you ſo do, God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love, and all your good works; for at that great day, the book ſhall be opened, our works manifeſted, and as we have done, ſo we muſt be rewarded; for then ſhall he reward every man according to his works. But a little to recal ourſelves.

The priſoners are tried, the verdict brought in, the indictments are found, and the Judge now ſits upon life and death, even ready with ſparkling eyes to pronounce the ſentence. The Lord grant, that when this day comes, the ſentence may be for us, and we be ſaved, to our everlaſting comfort. Oh! now hold up your heads, all ye ſaints of the moſt high God, for this ſhall be a bleſſed day for you, for then ſhall ye hear the ſweet heavenly voice of Chriſt, ſaying, 'Come ye bleſſed of my 'Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.' I cannot expreſs what joy it will be to the righteous when they ſhall hear Chriſt ſay, 'Come ye bleſſed 'ſouls who have been bathed in repenting tears,' Here is a ſentence able to revive the dead, much more the afflicted. Are you ſorrowing for your ſins, leave it a while, and meditate with me on this enſuing melody, Hark! yonder is the choir of angels ſounding to the judge, while he is pronouncing thy ſentence. Now is the day of your coronation, now ſhall ye be made perfectly happy, and that

that for ever. Come, ſaith Chriſt, you that have ſuffered for me, now you ſhall have your reward; you ſhall have your ſouls filled to the brim with joy, ſuch as is unſpeakable and full of glory.

But I muſt return to the left hand, and ſhew another crew, prepared for another ſentence. And Oh! what a terrible ſentence will that be, which will make all ears glow and tingle, 'His lips, ſaith 'the prophet, are full of indignation, and his 'tongue like a conſuming fire,' Iſa. xxx. 27. What fire is ſo hot as that fiery ſentence, Mat. xxv. 41. 'Depart from me ye curſed into everlaſting fire, 'prepared for the devil and his angels.

1. They muſt depart. This ſeems nothing to the wicked now; they are content to be gone; they have much more delight in ſin, than in God's ſervice. But whither muſt they go? From me. If from me, then from all my mercies, my glory, and my ſalvation. But whither, O Lord, ſhall the curſed go, that depart from Thee? Into what haven ſhall they arrive? What maſter ſhall they ſerve? It is thought a great puniſhment to be baniſhed from our native ſoils: What then is it to be baniſhed from the Almighty God? But whither muſt they go? Into everlaſting fire. Oh! what bed is this? No feathers but fire, no friends but furies, no eaſe but fetters, no day-light but darkneſs, no clocks to paſs away the time, but endleſs eternity, fire eternal, always burning and never dying. O who can endure everlaſting flame! It ſhall not be quenched night nor day: The ſmoke thereof ſhall go up for ever and ever. The wicked ſhall be crowded together like bricks in a fiery furnace: But for whom was this fire prepared? 'For the devil and his angels.' Theſe muſt be your companions. The laſt ſentence is now pronounced

nounced. What! Go, Who? Ye curſed into everlaſting fire, to crews of devils. O take heed, that you live in the fear of God, leſt, that leaving his ſervice, he give you this reward. 'Depart from 'me ye curſed,' &c.

2. Conſider then, what fearful trembling will ſeize on their ſouls, that have their ſentence for eternal flames: Oh! which way will they turn? How will they eſcape the Almighty's wrath! To go backward, is impoſſible, to go forward is intolerable. Whoſe help will they crave? God is their Judge, heaven their foe, the ſaints deride them, angels hate them. Good Lord! What a world of miſeries hath ſeized on miſerable ſouls. Their executioners are devils, the dungeon hell; the earth ſtands open, and the furnace burning, ready to receive them. Oh! How will theſe poor ſouls quake and tremble! Every part of their body will bear a part in their doleful ditty: Eyes weeping, hands wringing, breaſts beating, hearts aching, with voices crying. Now, O man of the earth, what ſhall thy wealth avail thee: One drop of water to cool thy tongue in the flames, is worth more than all the pleaſures in the world.

Thus you have heard the ſentence of the juſt and wicked: And the Judge is riſen from his glorious ſeat. The ſaints guard him along, and the ſentenced priſoners are delivered to the jailors, ſhrieks of horror ſhall be heard. What woes and lamentations ſhall be uttered, when devils and reprobates, and all the damned crew of hell, ſhall be driven into hell, never to return. Down they go howling, ſhrieking, and gnaſhing their teeth: The world leaves them, the earth forſakes them, hell entertains them; there they muſt live, and yet not live nor die, but dying live, and living die.

Oh!

Oh! miſerable muſt theſe be, if the drowning of the old world, the ſwallowing up of Korah, and the burning of Sodom with brimſtone, were attended with ſuch terror and hideous outcries; how infinitely, to all poſſibility of conceit, or expreſſion of belief, will be the confuſion and trembling of that red fiery day: In a word, what wailing, weeping, roaring and yelling, filling both heaven, earth, and hell! O moſt miſerable wretches, Mat. xxii. 12. 'Take them away and caſt them 'into utter darkneſs: there ſhall be weeping and 'gnaſhing of teeth.' A darkneſs indeed, they muſt for ever be debarred from the light of heaven. Sun-ſhine never peeps within theſe walls, nothing is there but ſmoke and darkneſs; and ſuch is the portion of ſinners, and the reward of the wicked.

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